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Jelinek legislation toughens child protection

LANSING – Judges could use a parent’s substance abuse problem or substance abuse conviction when determining child custody under legislation introduced in the Senate, announced Sen. Ron Jelinek, R-Three Oaks.

Senate Bill 535 would amend the Child Custody Act to add “controlled substance abuse or commission of a controlled substance offense” to the list of factors used in determining the best interests of a child in custody battles.

“Currently judges can look at the mental, physical and moral health of the parents, but those guidelines do not really allow for drug abuse to be specifically used as a factor in determining custody,” Jelinek said. “Substance abuse is a serious issue that can lead to violence, neglect and psychological problems for the child or children involved. A child should not be placed in a home where it is taking place.”

SB 535 now goes to the Senate Committee on Families and Human Services for consideration.

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